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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 001543

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media led with the return of the bodies of abducted IDF soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser. Major media highlighted pictures of PM Ehud Olmert, Defense Minister Ehud Olmert, and IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi comforting the killed servicemen's families. Media quoted officials as saying that an initial examination of the bodies revealed that both soldiers were killed

during the assault on their border patrol two years ago, an attack that sparked the Second Lebanon War. Uncharacteristic of the subdued headlines in most newspapers, but reflecting a public sentiment, Israel Hayom bannered: "Our Pain, their Wickedness," Shas newspaper Yom Leyom: "Pain opposite a Cruel Enemy," and Globe "Whom We Deal With." The media reported that yesterday Hizbullah Secretary-General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah "left his bunker" to participate in the celebrations for the release of Samir Kuntar and his comrades. Media quoted Kuntar as saying that Israel will be longing for eliminated Hizbullah COO Imad Mughniyah. Yediot quoted a senior Israeli source as saying that Kuntar is slated for assassination. Maariv printed a lengthy interview with Kuntar. The Jerusalem Post reported that Knesset members vowed revenge against Nasrallah. Leading media cited Israel's concern that Hizbullah will initiate attacks against Israel and prevent IAF overflight of Lebanon.

The media reported that Morris Talansky's five-day cross-examination will start today. Yediot reported that the FBI is probing Talansky's possible money laundering in the U.S.

Leading media reported that the U.S.-Iran dialogue has resumed after 30 years. Israel Radio quoted the British daily The Guardian as saying that the U.S. will open an interests section in Tehran next month. Israel Radio quoted officials in Jerusalem as saying yesterday that the demand that Iran suspend its enrichment of uranium has to be a condition for any negotiations and should not under any circumstances be dropped.

Israel Radio reported that the Pentagon has informed the Congress that it may sell Israel four warships manufactured by Lockheed-Martin which cost \$1.9 billion. The ships belong to a new generation designed for coastal patrolling.

Yediot reported that early this month a large Israeli-made drone crashed in Afghanistan, and implied that it may have fallen into the Taliban's hands. The UAV was on an intelligence mission at the service of the Spanish forces

Maariv cited a Reuters news item that many U.S. Evangelicals have disassociated themselves from Olmert because of his willingness to divide Jerusalem.

Ha'aretz reported that the Shin Bet and Israel Police have opened a criminal investigation against former IDF Intelligence (MI) chief Eli Zeira, on suspicion of disclosing state secrets. This marks the first time that the Shin Bet has investigated allegations involving state security against a senior officer -- Zeira is a major general-- and former MI head. The investigation is focusing on the allegation that Zeira revealed the name of Ashraf Marwan, the Mossad agent and Egyptian businessman who died under mysterious circumstances in London about a year ago.

Maariv advises Israelis to buy property in the U.S. at this time.

Leading media reported that the Israeli pharmaceutical company Teva is weighing the acquisition of the U.S. firm Barr Pharmaceuticals for \$7.4 billion.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that Eric Silver, doyen of the foreign press in Jerusalem, passed away on Tuesday at the age of 73.

Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "[U.S. officials'] excuses for changing American policy vis-a-vis Iran sound exactly like Olmert's excuses for agreeing to a cease-fire with Hamas and a prisoner exchange with Hizbullah." Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Hizbullah has proven over the past two years that his understanding of Israeli society is not so great as one believes."

Veteran columnist Evelyn Gordon wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Unless the U.S., and the world, understand that appeasing Hizbullah at Israel's expense will only invite further aggression, Sheba could well prove the spark that ignited a chain reaction of international conflicts round the globe."

Liberal columnist and anchor Ofer Shelach wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "A strong society, which loves life, does not bother with vain posturing and promises of revenge."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "The crux of [the] reassessment [of Israeli policy on prisoner exchange] should be how we differentiate between the living and the dead, between exchanges involving live prisoners and dead soldiers -- a differentiation that has become worryingly blurred in Israeli society."

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "The situation in southern Lebanon is stable at present and does not appear to be threatening. By and large the latest developments in Lebanon have been positive from Israel's point of view."

Conservative columnist Uri Orbach "addressed" the Lebanese people in Yediot Aharonot: "Israel has no border conflict with you, the Lebanese people, but we definitely have a big struggle over your moral limits.... For 30 years you have failed to tell between a national hero and a child-murderer."

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz: "Two years after an ephemeral militia provoked a regional superpower, the militia is growing stronger than ever, and the regional superpower is in a state of turmoil, degeneration and foggy stupor."

Block Quotes:

II. "The Summer of Talk"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (7/17): "The prisoner-body exchange between Israel and Hizbullah should be seen in its wider context.... American officials mock their Israeli counterparts any time they recite long-winded monologues about the 'struggle between moderates and extremists' in the Middle East. How does this struggle exist in the same universe as Israel's agreement to talk to Hamas and Hizbullah? the Americans ask. But their excuses for changing American policy vis-a-vis Iran sound exactly like Olmert's excuses for agreeing to a cease-fire with Hamas and a prisoner exchange with Hizbullah. The Americans and the Israelis insist that it is not dialogue, that the tough policy remains intact and that they do not believe the other side."

II. "Petty Nasrallah"

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (7/17): "Since the [Second Lebanon] War, Hizbullah ... has been behaving with restraint. I suggest that Israeli not blame themselves for everything.... Nasrallah has proven over the past two years that his understanding of Israeli society is not so great as one believes. When he wanted to trade body parts of other soldiers, the families of the soldiers were the first to tell him: 'Keep the body parts; we won't pay for what you have left.' Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev came back home yesterday because Israel had clarified that there is a possibility that they would be declared killed in action and that Hizbullah would not get anything."

III. "Hizbullah's Next Pretext"

Veteran columnist Evelyn Gordon wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (7/17): "Pressing Israel to cede Sheba is worse than pointless; it is destructive. By demonstrating that no border, even if unanimously certified by the Security Council, is actually final -- that each 'certified' border is merely a starting point for new territorial claims -- it would preclude any chance of Middle East peace. Clearly, Israel would have no incentive for

additional withdrawals under these circumstances.... Even worse, however, a Hizbullah victory over Sheba would eliminate other countries' incentive to restrain their own radical organizations.... If Hizbullah's tactic succeeds, it would be a win-win proposition for every government in the Middle East.... It is rare that a single decision contains the potential for sowing so much havoc. But unless the U.S., and the world, understand that appeasing Hizbullah at Israel's expense will only invite further aggression, Sheba could well prove the spark that ignited a chain reaction of international conflicts round the globe."

IV. "Tenacity, But No Revenge"

Liberal columnist and anchor Ofer Shelach wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (7/17): "Our problem isn't Nasrallah. The macabre sights that he produces, including a display of coffins on live broadcast yesterday, are not really an ingenious toying with the battered Israeli psyche. If anything, they only confirm what we think of him, and the sense of our own moral superiority. The problem is the paradigm of the Goldwasser and Regev families, who over the last two years have been the epitome of a tenacious and effective public battle on the one hand, and a noble one on the other -- but this model has not been implemented in other places, including in the government and in the media. The problem is that we are beginning to believe that we are indeed made of spider webs.... There is no point in looking back, there is also no point in continuing the festival of crying, which is probably not to the liking of these two noble families. What we have to remember is: A strong society, which loves life, does not bother with vain posturing and promises of revenge. It does not try to repay its enemies' insults with other insults and cruelty for cruelty, it does not wallow in its pain and on the other hand, it does not preoccupy itself endlessly with its image of deterrence."

IV. "The Deal and the Reassessment"

Ha'aretz editorialized (7/17): "This marks the end of the deal with Hizbullah. From this point on, what is needed is a serious reassessment of the Israeli position. The crux of this reassessment should be how we differentiate between the living and the dead, between exchanges involving live prisoners and dead soldiers -- a differentiation that has become worryingly blurred in Israeli society. One can certainly understand the Goldwasser and Regev families, who, until the very last moment, were unable to accept that their sons were no longer alive and needed clear-cut proof to start the mourning process. It is harder to understand the addiction of an entire country to an illusion that was orchestrated by Hizbullah, but which relied heavily on the Israeli media and Israeli politicians, who infused the negotiations with promises, cliches, jingles, bicycle rides, and problematic statements like 'bring the boys back home.' After all, it was clear to all that IDF soldiers and fatalities are not children, and that bodies cannot be 'brought home' -- only buried."

VI. "Hizbullah's Capitulation"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in Yediot Aharonot (7/17): "As a result of the fighting in Beirut, Hizbullah lost the legitimacy that had enabled it to dictate political discourse in Lebanon.... The Siniora government symbolizes a return to normality in Lebanon, and it is a masterpiece of careful ethnic representation.... The Christians are over-represented and the Shiites very under-represented. Hizbullah agreed to this. And what about Hizbullah's presence in southern Lebanon, south of the Litani? The IDF has charged that the organization is smuggling arms and munitions into that area. UNIFIL, in its last report, denies this categorically. It is precisely the UNIFIL report which is worthy of credence, because Hizbullah abides strictly by the rules laid down for the territory south of the Litani.... The situation in southern Lebanon is stable at present and does not appear to be threatening. By and large the latest developments in Lebanon have been positive from Israel's point of view."

VII. "A Letter to the Lebanese"

Conservative columnist Uri Orbach "addressed" the Lebanese people in Yediot Aharonot (7/17): "Israel has no border conflict with you, the Lebanese people, but we definitely have a big struggle over your

moral limits. We identified the bodies of our [dead soldiers] Udi and Eldad within a few hours. And you? For 30 years you have failed to identify the nature of your Samir Kuntar. For 30 years you have failed to differentiate between a national hero and a child-murderer. From your point of view, it is enough for someone to have killed a Jew, be it a little girl from Nahariya, to be welcomed among you with honor due to royalty.... This is a sad day for Israel, but it contains pain, restraint, and pride over everything we are: a fortified Jewish wall against the spearhead of the Iranian folly, with your silence and encouragement. Our sons have come back -- so has the child-murderer to your country. With great grief we received bodies. You received a bastard. Look at the difference."

VIII. "Here Are the Results of That War"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz (7/17): "Here are the results of Israel's war against Hizbullah so far.... Two years after an ephemeral militia provoked a regional superpower, the militia is growing stronger than ever, and the regional superpower is in a state of turmoil, degeneration and foggy stupor.... In two and a half years of Olmert's government, Israel has failed in four different campaigns. None of these failures was necessary. Basically Israel was and remains a very powerful country. However, when a stupid government conducts a foolish policy in every field and respect, the result is a resounding failure. This failure could become a real threat -- no, not a threat to our survival, but definitely a strategic one."

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